

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

MEETING OF SENATE

Minutes of a meeting held on
Wednesday 22 June 2022 in Council Room 1 & 2, Fielding Johnson Building

Present:	Nishan Canagarajah (Chair)	
	Yassine Amrani	Phil Baker
	Huw Barton	Edmund Burke
	John Challiss	Sarah Davies
	Andrew Ellis	Rob Fryer
	Sandeep Handa	Richard Holland
	Liz Jones	Sally Kyd
	Daniel Ladley	Lu Liu
	Louise Masterman	Catherine Morley
	Andre Ng	Kevin Paterson
	Thompson Robinson	John Schwabe
	Jacqui Shaw	Lisa Smith
	Anne Thomas	Chris Wilkins
	Hugo Williams	Steve Williams
	David Wright	

In attendance: Geoff Green (Registrar and Secretary), Alison Benson (Acting Assistant Secretary), Nerys Bradley (Assistant Director of HR, Academic, for 22/M08), Georgia Henton (SU Sports Officer, for 22/M07 (c)) .

Observers: Kerry Law (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professional Services), Deirdre O’Sullivan (UCU representative) and Kevin Joyce (Governance Officer).

Apologies for absence were received from Emma Bunce, Krista Cowman, Anne-Marie Deeb, Liz Draper, Sandra Dudley, Stewart Fishwick, Ian Forristal, Karl Herbert, Rhiannon Jenkins, Henrietta O’Connor, Mark Purnell, Richard Thomas, Ian Somerville

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

22/M06 WELCOME

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed Senators, attendees and observers to the meeting.

22/M07 STANDING BUSINESS

(a) Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

(b) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Senate **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2022 as an accurate record.

(c) Matters Arising

Senate **noted** that all matters arising from the meeting on 2 March 2022 had been completed.

(d) Chair's Business

(i) Update from the Chair

The Vice-Chancellor provided a report on key University developments.

Senate **noted** the recent Research Excellence Framework (REF) results and the Complete University Guide 2023 rankings which had been shared in many different committees. The Vice-Chancellor commended the positive results and thanked colleagues for all their efforts.

Senate **noted** that a student academic experience survey had been undertaken during May 2022 which had had a 10.5% completion rate in its pilot year. Feedback was due to be shared widely and actions would be developed to address the concerns raised. The Vice-Chancellor highlighted that only 44% of respondents had indicated receipt of assignment feedback within the 20 working day target, and asked Senators for their support in prioritising this in the next academic year, including the refinement of communications to students as appropriate.

Senate **noted** that the University of Leicester would shortly sign a Civic Universities Agreement jointly with De Montfort University and Loughborough University. This would enable close collaborative work with local authorities in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to help improve the lives and wellbeing of local citizens and add value to the region.

Senate **noted** that changes were being made to Senate membership to increase representation from College staff, Professional Services staff and students. The election process would be communicated in July 2022 and Senators were asked to encourage engagement and nominations from their Colleges.

(ii) Q & A session

As well as improvements in response times where necessary, members highlighted the need for effective, timely and accurate communications with students in order to manage their expectations around timelines for assignment feedback, which were expressed as a quantity of working days not calendar days.

Members also highlighted the need for additional staff resource to support identified areas of University growth. This had been factored into the University planning process; however it was acknowledged that some areas had found recent growth more challenging than others. It was further noted that the COVID-19 pandemic and intermittent industrial action had exacerbated the impacts in recent months.

In response to a query around Senate membership and effectiveness, it was clarified that the forthcoming membership expansion had been discussed with UCU, one of the campus trade unions, and that the next Senate effectiveness review in 2023/24 would consider comprehensively the role of Senate.

22/M08 STRATEGIC BUSINESS TO CONSIDER**(a) Academic Career Path**

Senate **received** an update on the new draft academic career map from Edmund Burke, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Nerys Bradley, Assistant Director of HR (Academic). Senate **noted** the contribution to date of the members of the Task and Finish group on academic promotions and the broad consultation undertaken to date in the development of the plans.

An overview was given of the development of the draft Career Path. A Task and Finish Group had been convened to develop an updated, fit-for-purpose academic promotion scheme and career path to align with the broader strategic direction of the University. The first phase of work had focused on the draft Academic Career Path and an accompanying process review. A further phase was planned to consider a 'Professional Practice' career pathway as well as a progression route for Grade 7 academic-related staff in the teaching and research job family. The Career Path was being consulted on widely across the academic community, and the People, EDI and Wellbeing Committee (of Council) would consider it on 23 June 2022. Further opportunities for consultation on the draft would be available over the summer prior to final governance approvals and launch in September 2022.

Senate provided verbal feedback on the draft Academic Career Path.

The focus on quantity, rather than quality, of publication was queried as a potentially conflicting message viewed against the REF follow-up process. This feedback would be taken on board across both the Academic Career Path and REF areas of work. [ACTION: PVC Research & Enterprise]

It was clarified that the career path had been widely benchmarked against other universities, referenced in Appendix B of the paper.

Senate discussed the benchmarks used in determining research income levels. It was noted that the scheme had deliberately been designed not to be overly explicit or prescriptive to reflect disciplinary norms. The professional judgment of the promotion panels would remain key in order to ensure that disciplinary expertise was most appropriately deployed.

Members expressed concern that the progression route for Grade 7 academic-related colleagues had been placed in the second phase of the programme rather than being given more urgency. It was reported that communication of the agreed timeline, and the relative importance of this part of the scheme, would be paramount to ensure those staff did not become disaffected or perceive that their areas had been deprioritised. Senators were asked to lend their support to conveying these messages appropriately in seeking feedback on the scheme. [ACTION: All members of Senate]

Similarly, members agreed the importance of ensuring that all proposed pathways were treated equally, for example by examining examples of evidence of achievement to ensure they were not perceived as more closely aligned to some pathways than others. [ACTION: Assistant Director HR (Academic)]

Senate discussed the proportion of research-only posts, since the default was a combined teaching and research post. It was agreed that these posts would be the exception rather than the norm, reserved for cases of exceptional quality and/or high income generation, and that ExB was considering this closely. It would also be crucial for students to be able to access the work of internationally-recognised research colleagues within their discipline.

It was **agreed** that the draft Academic Career Path would be distributed to Senators in order to facilitate wider circulation to, and feedback from, their teams. [ACTION: Assistant Director of HR (Academic)]

Senate **noted** the content of the report and **agreed** to provide further feedback and comment from their areas as discussed. [ACTION: All members of Senate]

(b) REF results update

Senate **received** a report regarding the Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021) Results, which detailed the outcomes and next steps towards REF 2028.

Senate **noted** how the REF ambitions and goals linked to the UoL strategic objectives and priorities, which focussed on world changing research.

It was reported that REF 2028 would be shaped by the Future of Research Assessment Programme (FRAP). FRAP would identify evaluation models and approaches to encourage and strengthen the emphasis on delivering excellent research and impact, and to support a positive research culture.

Senate **noted** the next steps for Leicester's progress towards REF 2028 were split into three phases: research culture and people; delivery; and optimisation.

(c) Students Union End of Year Report

Senate **received** a presentation on the Students' Union priorities for 2021/22 from Georgia Henton, SU Sports Officer. The presentation summarised progress made towards KPIs and highlighted those that had been completed or carried forward to the next academic year.

The following initiatives were highlighted:

- Reduced complaints/academic focused concerns to Advice service;
- Student representative on every working group and committee;
- Increased participation in careers events;

- Dedicated, free space on campus for students with caring responsibilities as well as a liberation fund which could be accessed by students; and
- Taxi button built into Safe Zone app with pre-approved vendors.

Senate **noted** the blended learning benchmark which demonstrated how the UoL and Students Union worked collaboratively to reflect the needs of both parties.

Senate **noted** the key themes from semester one of the Academic Rep System and the key themes planned for semesters.

Senate **noted** the content of the presentation and thanked the outgoing full-time Students' Union Officers for their work over the previous academic year.

(d) Student Wellbeing Strategy

Senate **received** a presentation on the Student Wellbeing Strategy.

It was highlighted that student wellbeing was the responsibility of everyone within the University, and that the Strategy would support this. The presentation summarised eight themes built around the UUK's StepChange framework and detailed the aims and KPIs of the strategy:

- Leadership
- Transition
- Prevention
- Early Intervention
- Support and Response
- Staff
- Partnerships
- Systems, data and communication

Senate **noted** that the 'Health Assured' service was available to all students 24 hours a day, 7 days a week giving them access to support such as a counselling service and online resources to support Wellbeing. The service was similar to that of the University's employee assistance programme through Validium, and would help to manage the pressures on corporate services in student support and develop wider resources.

Senate **noted** that a detailed delivery plan including timescales was under development and, following Senate's consideration, will be finalised over the summer to be in place for the start of the next academic year.

It was confirmed that the Student Wellbeing Strategy could be circulated widely to colleagues after approval by the People, EDI and Wellbeing Committee on 23 June, but that no formal launch was planned.

(e) Changes within the College of Life Sciences

Senate **approved** the renaming of the School of Allied Health Professions to the School of Healthcare, with effect from 1 August 2022.

Senate **approved** the proposed merger of the existing academic activity within the Department of Neuroscience, Psychology and Behaviour and the School of Psychology.

Senate **recommended** to Council the creation of a new academic School from the merging of the Department of Neuroscience, Psychology and Behaviour and the School of Psychology, to be named the School of Psychology and Vision Sciences.

(f) Honorary Degrees

Senate **noted** the confidentiality of the report.

Senate **noted** that satisfactory due diligence reports had been carried out on all candidates presented. These had been approved by the Registrar and Secretary in line with established process.

Senate **approved** the proposed Honorary Degrees which would be subject to final approval from Council on 5 July 2022.

22/M09 SUMMARY REPORT OF ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

Senate **received** a summary report of business items to approve and note.

Senate **approved** the following items:

- a. University Term and Semester Dates 2025/26 – Education Committee
- b. Proposed amendments to Senate Regulation 6.3 – Education Committee
- c. Proposed changes to subcommittee governance – Education Committee
- d. University Distinguished Teaching Fellows

Senate **noted** the following items:

- a. Annual Programme Review – Education Committee
- b. Policy on Responsible Use of Bibliometrics – Research and Enterprise Committee

22/M10 ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

Senate **noted** that the appointment of Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professional Services had resulted in proposed changes to the University Statutes and Ordinances.

Senate **noted** that the current Deputy Vice-Chancellor position would be renamed Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor with a focus on academic support within the University.

Senate **noted** the changes to the Statutes and Ordinances, which will be formally endorsed by Council.

Senate **approved** the changes to the Standing Orders.

22/M11 REPORTED BUSINESS

Senate **considered** the following reports from Committees:

- a. Education Committee
Senate **noted** reports from the meetings of the Education Committee held on 22 February 2022 and 22 March 2022.
- b. Research and Enterprise Committee
Senate **noted** reports from the meetings of the Research and Enterprise Committee held on 25 May 2022.
- c. Reputation, Recruitment and Performance Board
Senate **noted** the report of the meeting of the Reputation, Recruitment and Performance Board held on 1 March 2022.
- d. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee
Senate **noted** the report of the meeting of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee held on 30 March 2022.
- e. University Distinguished Teaching Fellows
Senate **approved** the five staff citations for the award of University Distinguished Teaching Fellow (UDTF).
- f. University Officer appointments
Senate **noted** the senior recruitment update summary report.
- g. Programmes Approved and Withdrawn
Senate **noted** the report of programmes approved in principle, in full and those withdrawn since its last meeting.
- h. Outcomes of Student Discipline Panels
Senate **received** the outcomes of recent Student Discipline Panels.

22/M12

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Senate **noted** the provisional meeting dates scheduled for 2022-23 as follows:

- Wednesday 5 October 2022 at 2pm
- Wednesday 15 February 2023 at 2pm
- Wednesday 14 June 2023 at 2pm

CHAIR

Duration of meeting: 95 minutes